Die for the Boycott and Nation: Martyrdom and the 1905 Anti-American Movement in China

SIN-KIONG WONG

The National University of Singapore

On July 16, 1905, an overseas Chinese, Feng Xiawei, committed suicide in front of the American consulate in Shanghai. The impetus for Feng's sacrifice was a labor treaty being negotiated with the United States, which had placed obstacles to the Chinese who would like to go to the United States to make a living. Two months before Feng's suicide, merchants in Shanghai had asked Americans to revise their immigration policy or face a boycott in two months. The Americans showed no sign of yielding. Four days before the deadline, Feng killed himself. This previously unknown individual became a hero in the 1905 boycott movement.

The existing works on the boycott movement focus on the political and economic aspects of the event. The main consensus is that the boycott was the product of nationalism that had begun to rise after the Boxer Uprising of 1900. Margaret Field, one of the earliest scholars interested in the history of the boycott, has concluded in her...